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which is founded on spiritual independence. The book, therefore, in all its voluminous detail repays the most careful reading.

THE INTIMATE LETTERS OF HESTER PIOZZI AND PENELOPE PENNINGTON.
Edited by OSWALD G. KNAPP. New York: John Lane Company, 1914.

Additional information about Dr. Johnson's Mrs. Thrale will be sure to prove attractive and interesting to a rather large circle of readers. We are, surely, further removed in spirit from the eighteenth century than from Elizabeth's spacious times or from the age of Pericles, and Mrs. Piozzi was as much of her time as was the object of her greatest admiration, Dr. Johnson. Throughout her desultory, familiar, self-expressive correspondence she is, when she does not merely gossip, as much occupied in her light way with analyzing current values as was Dr. Johnson in his weighty way. She was a moralist because moralism was culture. Moreover, life was to her an exciting affair; its variety offered endless opportunities for the exercise of a critical and appreciative mind. For every one of the ills of existence this amelioration at least was provided: that one could always make a just remark about it. Having said the right thing, one felt orientated with the universe; ruffled feathers could be smoothed and the humming-bird flights of a lively mind could be resumed with fresh courage. To be ill, to be bled, to be physicked, to witness the sufferings of a gouty husband, to observe a charming female friend "going into a decline"—these were miseries to be reckoned with. But one could at least judge them rightly, and, in taking the proper attitude, feel a self-respectful satisfaction. One studied, therefore, to get the right note of resignation or of appreciative sentiment into every opinion, and one saved one's mind alive.

In all this there was zest, but no very deep or infectious enthusiasm. Indeed, it sometimes seems as if Mrs. Piozzi and her contemporaries entertained the most flattering opinions of anything in literature or life with which their critical acumen could find no fault, whether or not the thing itself afforded them much real enjoyment. On the other hand, whatever offended their sense of proportion was likely to seem wholly contemptible. But if there is a certain dry superficiality in Mrs. Piozzi's quaintly characteristic self-revelation, at any rate she never committed the romantic error of magnifying her joys or sorrows to infinity. She is usually shrewd, bracing, and wholesome; her letters are full of an unfailing animation, of an admirable vigor. At the same time among all the little pleasant flashes of disposition in which the letters abound, there is little indication of character or even of especially strong mentality. There is no denying that an occasional quotation of words emanating from one of the greater personalities—such as that of Fanny Burney—contrasts rather strikingly with the great mass of Piozziana.

In short, after a perusal of the intimate correspondence of Mrs. Piozzi, the reader will be able to see more clearly than before what was the nature of the fascination which this woman exercised upon Dr. Johnson, and also what it was that made possible his severe reprobation of her conduct after the death of Thrale. For even men as subject to violent prejudice as the great Lexicographer do not cast off friends for, so to speak, technical reasons. Prejudice, like admiration, is of slow growth, and generally

nothing so fully damns a person in our eyes as the apparent confirmation of a long-entertained suspicion of weakness in him. The *Letters*, therefore, while enabling us to judge their author with something of the lenience that understanding teaches, throw back a certain light upon the relations of Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale. Moreover, to those who possess a flair for eighteenth-century life, manners, and style, these letters offer a fresh opportunity for analysis and amused reflection. If there sometimes supervenes a little of that weariness which naturally arises from reading letters not intended for one, curiosity concerning the friend of Dr. Johnson will carry us through.

MIRABEAU: A BIOGRAPHY. By LOUIS BARTHOUS, Prime Minister of France. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1913.

That the life of a statesman is usually best written by a statesman (of a later day) is a truth frequently illustrated, and it has seldom been better exemplified than in M. Barthou's illuminating and brilliantly written biography of Mirabeau. Probably the life of no other great man offers so many confusing questions of fact and interpretation, so many strange anomalies of character, as does that of Mirabeau. And necessary as it is to view his career, as M. Barthou does view it, in the light of a wide knowledge of history and of affairs, there can be no understanding of the influence wielded by the statesman without taking into account the personality of the man. Fully appreciative of this fact, M. Barthou seeks on every page to give us not merely a clear-cut presentation of facts, but a living impression of character. Mirabeau's temperament and genius are accounted for, so far as such phenomena ever can be accounted for, through heredity. The story of his early life, close packed with action, redolent of disreputable intrigue, feverish with passion—this extraordinary career, of which the outstanding incidents are seductions, fierce quarrels with wife, sister, and father, slanders, self-justifications, imprisonments, and the endless production of letters, pamphlets, books—all this is told concisely but unsparingly. Nothing is glossed over, yet as we read we cannot help being won to admiration by Mirabeau's superhuman energy, his resourcefulness and audacity. It is as though the man's character in a manner purified itself through a violent activity of thought and deed, always turbulent, but seldom quite ignoble. Telling the tale with perfect lucidity and frankness, M. Barthou makes us feel the character of Mirabeau as his contemporaries felt it. It seems that only by rare good fortune are we able to say in regard to any single event of Mirabeau's pre-political life that his motives were honest or his conduct blameless. Even the vexatious question as to the degree in which his written works owe their quality and substance to plagiarism or collaboration arises repeatedly. All this comes out clearly in the narrative, but at the same time the essential bigness of Mirabeau comes out with a clearness that is surprising. M. Barthou, however, has not been hypnotized by the character of the man about whom he writes, nor does he regard Mirabeau as one of the forces of nature. There is always an adequate detachment in his attitude toward him.

The story of Mirabeau's tempestuous early life admirably prepares one to understand the great part of his career, and here, too, the biographer